

Fairfield Chamber to host Legislative Forum promoting civic engagement

Mendy McAdams, Fairfield Area Chamber of Commerce

The Fairfield Area Chamber of Commerce will host a Legislative Forum to provide area residents with an opportunity to engage directly with elected officials and learn more about current legislative priorities impacting the local community.

The forum will take place on Saturday, Feb. 21, at the Fairfield Public Library. Doors will open at 7 a.m., with the program running from 7:30 to 9 a.m. The event is free and open to the public.

State legislators Sen. Adrian Dickey and Representatives Helena Hayes and Jeff Shipley will provide updates from the Iowa Capitol and discuss issues currently under consideration. As this forum takes place early in the legislative session, the discussion will focus on emerging priorities, with taxes and education identified as the primary topics for each session. "The Legislative Forum



Helena Hayes, R-New Sharon (Iowa Legislature)

is an important part of the Chamber's mission to encourage civic involvement and informed dialogue," said Mendy McAdams, Executive Director of the Fairfield Area Chamber of Commerce. "It offers our community a respectful space to hear directly from lawmakers and better understand the policies and decisions shaping our future."

To help ensure a productive



Rep. Jeff Shipley (R-Birmingham)

and respectful discussion, all audience questions will be submitted in writing. Questions must be topic-specific and relevant to the issues legislators are actively working on. Paper and writing utensils will be provided for attendees wishing to submit questions. Submitted questions will be reviewed and approved to be presented during the Q&A portion of the program.



State Sen. Adrian Dickey, R-Packwood

In an effort to accommodate as many questions as possible, participants are respectfully asked to state their question concisely and reserve personal stories or extended commentary. Follow-up questions will not be permitted unless the participant returns to the end of the line and resubmits a new question. The Legislative Forum is intended to be an informational event and is not

a debate.

The Chamber reminds attendees that political discussions can be passionate and encourages all participants to remain courteous and respectful. In the event of disruptions, the forum will transition to questions submitted in advance and read solely by the moderator.

The Chamber extends its sincere appreciation to this year's sponsors — Freeman Kevenides Law Firm, Sierra Club, and Jefferson County Farmers and Neighbors — whose support ensures the forum remains free and accessible to the public. Sponsorship opportunities are still available for organizations interested in supporting civic engagement in the community.

A second Legislative Forum is scheduled for Saturday, March 21.

For more information, please contact the Fairfield Area Chamber of Commerce at 641-472-2111.

Plaintiffs

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property with law enforcement and ask Gordon Seaba to search the property. Koenig and Moulding arrived at the property accompanied by Assistant Jefferson County Attorney Elizabeth Estey, Jefferson County Sheriff's Deputy Burnett, Jefferson County Sheriff's Deputy Miller, and two Washington County Sheriff's Deputies who were not named in the brief.

The brief states that the defendants did not have a warrant to search the property, and that Timothy McConnell Seaba informed Moulding that no one was allowed on his property without a warrant.

"Defendant Moulding ignored Timothy McConnell Seaba and continued up the driveway to the main house," read the brief.

Plaintiffs allege that Moulding and Koenig entered Gordon Seaba's home without asking for or receiving consent, while Estey and the law enforcement officers remained at the bottom of the driveway, parked on the road. Plaintiffs claim that Gordon Seaba told Moulding to get out of his house, but that Moulding did not honor his request, and that Moulding and Koenig proceeded to search Gordon Seaba's home.

Plaintiffs allege that Moulding telephoned Deputy Miller and informed Miller that Gordon Seaba had consented to a search of his property, after which the officers entered the property and conducted a search of the outbuildings and campers.

"No evidence that a baby had ever existed was found on the property," the brief read.

Plaintiffs allege that Moulding then approached a separate building on the property, the home of Osborn and Timothy McConnell Seaba, whereupon Osborn told Moulding he did not have permission to enter her home without a warrant, and that she would sue him if he entered her home, but Moulding "blatantly ignored" this request and entered the home.

The three plaintiffs allege that the defendants' actions violated their Fourth Amendment right to be free from unreasonable searches, and that Moulding specifically committed trespassing and invasion of privacy. The plaintiffs request punitive damages, compensation for violation of their constitutional rights, and attorney's fees.

MOULDING RESPONDS

The Union reached out to Moulding to respond to the allegations against him contained in the complaint. Moulding said he and the other officials did enter the property to investigate a claim of a baby being born in secret, but insisted that the property owner voluntarily consented to the "brief inspection."

"The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) received an anonymous report alleging that an infant in Jefferson County had been born 'in secret,' was in acute distress, and may have been exposed to dangerous con-

trolled substances," Moulding wrote in an email to The Union. "The report included specific identifying information, including the infant's alleged name, date of birth, and location."

Moulding said that statutory obligations required DHHS to initiate an investigation, starting with the DHHS investigator contacting the person identified as the supposed child's mother to determine whether a child in distress was present.

"When the investigator requested permission to view the residence located on property owned by the woman's boyfriend's father, the woman became increasingly agitated. For safety reasons, the investigator, who was alone at the time, concluded the contact," Moulding wrote.

Moulding said that, after consulting with members of his own office, DHHS, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office and Washington County Sheriff's Office, "it was determined that DHHS should return to the property and seek consent from the property owner to confirm whether an infant was present."

"At no time was a criminal investigation initiated," he wrote. "Under Iowa law, the existence of an undisclosed or 'secret' child is not a criminal matter. The sole purpose of the inquiry was to ensure the safety and welfare of a potentially endangered infant, consistent with DHHS's legal responsibilities."

"The plaintiffs have the right to seek redress in court," Moulding wrote. "Jefferson

County is confident that a full and fair review of the facts will demonstrate that no wrongful conduct occurred by any County official or agency involved in this matter."

In addition to denying the plaintiffs' claim that he entered their property without consent, Moulding also cast doubt on the reliability of one of the plaintiffs, and one of their attorneys, Ed Harvey.

"As with any case in which credibility is central to the claims, it is appropriate for the court to consider the background and reliability of the individuals offering those allegations," he wrote. "Public records available on Iowa Courts Online reflect that one plaintiff, Ms. Osborn, has a lengthy record of prior incidents reflecting on her credibility, including a 2014 conviction in Calhoun County for making a false allegation of sexual abuse, alongside numerous other incidents spanning a half-dozen counties across the State of Iowa, which may be relevant to the any assessment of her credibility."

Moulding stated that Harvey's involvement in the case was "curious" since he is "not typically known as an attorney who practices in this area of the law."

"Hopefully, Harvey's representation is motivated by the interest of his clients, and not any grievance towards Jefferson County following his 2022 run for the office of Jefferson County Attorney, which he lost by a 50 point margin," Moulding wrote. "Regardless of Plaintiff's counsel, their representa-

tion does not affect Jefferson County's confidence in the judicial process or in the evidence that will be presented."

PLAINTIFFS' ATTORNEY RESPONDS

The Union reached out to Harvey for comment on this case, and he stated that "It is my policy not to discuss pending court cases in the media," though he referred The Union to contact his co-counsel Gina Messamer of Parrish Kruidenier Law Firm in Des Moines.

Messamer responded to The Union's request for comment, saying that she took this case because she fights for the underdog.

"The law should apply to everybody, including county attorneys," she said.

Messamer said she and Harvey filed charges against only Moulding and Koenig, and not the law enforcement officers from Jefferson and Washington counties, because those officers were acting on Moulding's request, and the officers did not enter the homes.

"It's the home entries that we were the most concerned about," Messamer said.

The Union asked Messamer to respond to Osborn's conviction for making a false allegation of sexual abuse, and Messamer said this was an attempt to "smear" Osborn, and had nothing to do with the allegations of this lawsuit.

The trial in this case is set for Jan. 11, 2027.

Contact Andy Hallman at 641-575-0135 or email him at andy.hallman@southeastiowaunion.com.

Crawfordsville News

By Billie Jo Rose, UNITED CHURCH WOMEN

Eight ladies gathered Tuesday, Jan. 13 at 2 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of the United Church of Crawfordsville for their regular meeting of the United Church Women.

Donna shared devotions from the book, "Simple Joys," which had belonged to her mother-in-law many years ago.

President Debbie Lowe called the meeting to order and the Opening Creed was read in unison.

In the absence of Secretary Billie Jo Rose, Linda Wiltfang read the minutes of the Nov. 11, 2025 meeting which were approved.

Pat Miller, treasurer reported monies on hand and they will be filed for audit. The regular offering was taken.

Correspondence: A thank you card was read from Margaret for money given for shipping Christmas boxes.

Committee Reports: Local Activities: Nothing new to report.

Dorcas: Donna report-

ed twenty-seven quilts had been delivered to the Hospice House in West Burlington.

Cards, Flowers and Gifts: The usual mix.

Mission Outreach: There was mention of donating beds for kids, "Sleep in Heavenly Peace." It was decided to leave that up to the church at this time.

Old Business: None

New Business: Discussion was held concerning getting the younger ladies of the church involved and it was decided to get their opinion as to

what they would like to see done.

Rummage Sale: Dates: Spring: April 23, 24, 25 with setup on Tuesday, April 21. Fall Dates: Sept. 2, 3, 4, 5, with setup on Monday, August 31.

Upcoming Events: Next meeting Tuesday, March 10. Hostess and Meditation: Par Miller. Dorcas Dates; January 26. Feb. 9, 23 and March 9.

Work Committees: January: Pat; February: Donna and March: Marlene.

Following a motion

to adjourn, the Closing Creed was read in unison.

Debbie closed with the following thought: "You can accomplish more in

one hour with God than one lifetime without Him." Walk in wisdom ... redeeming the time. Colossians 4:5.

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